

MINUTES
SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
BJ's Restaurant
990 North Center Street
Gaylord, Michigan
April 19, 2005

Chairman Manson called the meeting of the Snowmobile Advisory Committee (SAC) to order at 10:38 a.m., Tuesday, April 19, 2005 in Gaylord, Michigan.

Members Present:

Bill Manson, Chair, Region III, Michigan Snowmobile Association, Grand Rapids
Elza Inman, Grant Sponsor, Brethren
James Duke, Region I, Michigan Snowmobile Association, Munising
Bill Lucas, Region II, Michigan Snowmobile Association, Cadillac
Jack Nelson, Business Community, Greenville
Orville Olson, Representative at Large, Ludington

Members Absent:

Lee Murray, Representative At-Large, Hopkins

Ex-Officio Members Present:

Terry L. Johnson, Antrim County Sheriff's Department
Rick McVey, Ottawa National Forest
Rose Ingram, Huron-Manistee National Forest

Staff Present:

Mike Paluda, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management (FMFM), Marquette
Christie Pollock, Grants, Contracts and Customer Service (GCACS), Lansing
Richard Kennedy, FMFM, Lansing
Jim Radabaugh, State Trails Coordinator, FMFM, Lansing
Steve Kubisiak, Recreation and Trails Program Coordinator, FMFM, Lansing
Capt. Curt Bacon, Law Enforcement Division (LED), Marquette

The Snowmobile Advisory Committee, Department staff and audience introduced themselves. **Mr. Manson** welcomed everyone.

MINUTES

The minutes of the December 2, 2004, Snowmobile Advisory Committee Meeting was acknowledged.

Motion was made by Mr. Lucas to adopt the minutes of the December 2, 2004 meeting, seconded by Mr. Inman. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Chocolay Township Legislative Request for Speed Limit – **Mr. Radabaugh** referenced a letter from State Representative Adamini and Senator Prusi requesting the Snowmobile Advisory Committee (SAC) reconsider their position regarding snowmobile trail speed limits. In the letter they ask the SAC to support a 35 mile per hour speed limit along a 4 ½ mile section of State owned snowmobile trail located in a residential area in Chocolay Township, for a two-year test period.

Greg Zybert, Chocolay Township Chief of Police read a letter from Mr. Greg Seppanen, Chocolay Township Supervisor, dated April 14, 2005 into the record. The letter cited public safety concerns with snowmobiling in a residential area along the trail and requested SAC support for a posted 35 mile per hour speed. He noted that along the 4 ½ mile residential area there are 26 homes within 90 feet of the trail, the closest being 35 feet. He reported township police spent 386 patrol hours on the trails

last season and wrote nine speeding tickets. The highest speed was 98 mph and the lowest was 76 mph. He supports a posted speed limit because he believes it is more defensible in court and reduces the burden of proof placed upon a law enforcement officer to prove an individual was operating their snowmobile at an unreasonable speed.

Discussion ensued about potential alternatives to a posted speed limit. Alternatives discussed included modifying the trail alignment, enhanced signing, fencing and landscaping. The general consensus of SAC members is that there is already adequate provision in the law to regulate and enforce speeds on snowmobile trails. There was general opposition to posting a speed limit. They recommended the Department pursue alternative methods to control speeds.

Ms. Ingram said that as the land manager the Department of Natural Resources (Department) has an obligation to protect the public's health, safety and welfare, and this may be an opportunity to be proactive.

Mr. Radabaugh stated for the record that Representative Adamini and Senator Prusi have requested the committee's support for a posted 35 mile per hour speed limit for a two-year test period. He requested the SAC take action on this request.

Mr. Manson stated the Michigan Snowmobile Association is opposed to speed limits and he would like the opportunity to bring this request back to the association for further discussion before the SAC takes action on the township's and legislators' request.

This item will be placed on the June 21 SAC agenda for action.

Funding Requests to Repair Road Crossings – **Mr. Kennedy** reported several counties and clubs have requested funding from the snowmobile program to repair road crossings that have been damaged by snowmobile studs. He reported costs would be approximately \$5.00 a square foot. He requested guidance from the committee.

Mr. Manson said he is opposed to using snowmobile funds to repair roads crossings and recommended the request be denied. He believes snowmobilers have already paid their fare share to repair roads through the gasoline tax. **Mr. Duke** added that road departments are also responsible for roadway signing and believes snowmobile funds should not be used to pay for highway snowmobile crossing signs.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Gaylord-Cheboygan Workgroup – **Mr. Manson** reported that the Department presented the east and south route proposals to the Natural Resource Commission's (NRC), Land Management Policy Committee on April 7. The Department will be making a recommendation to the NRC at their May 5 meeting.

STAFF REPORTS

Law Enforcement – 2004-2005 Snowmobile Fatal Crash Report – **Captain Bacon** distributed a handout highlighting snowmobile fatalities. Twenty five (25) were reported for the 2004-2005 season. Twenty nine (29) reported for the 2003-2004 season. He noted a downward trend from an average of 38 fatalities per year from the previous decade. Increased law enforcement, education and zero tolerance were cited as possible factors contributing to the reduction in fatalities

Sheriff Johnson reported 3 fatalities in Antrim County.

Snowmobile Workgroup – **Mr. Radabaugh** reported that Deputy Koch appointed a workgroup made up of the SAC members, grant sponsors and Department staff to review the snowmobile program and recommend improvements to move the program forward. The workgroup has met four times and will meet again in May to finalize changes to the grant handbook. **Mr. Manson** added that the workgroup has been very productive and a good collaborative effort. The new grant handbook is expected to be complete by summer, and preseason meetings are planned.

USDA Forest Service – **Mr. McVey** reported for Anne Okonek, Hiawatha National Forest -- The snowmobile trail is closed in Gladstone and Escanaba. They are evaluating a request for a new route and hope to have it ready by next winter. The Whitefish River crossing has generated discussions with several groups and alternative crossings are being explored.

Mr. McVey reported for the Ottawa National Forest – Overall they had a good snow season. The Forest Service had more employees working enforcement and noted good compliance with trail permits. Gogebic County trail was re-routed and they are reviewing a request for a bridge to cross over Mud Creek, near Presque Isle River. Military Hill Bridge approaches are under review.

Ms. Ingram reported the Baldwin-White Cloud Ranger District is continuing work with the Lakeshore Snowmobile Club on a new snowmobile trail proposal, and noted the club is having difficulties obtaining private land owner permissions and county road easements. The 56th Street re-route is still being worked on.

Mr. Paluda reported the Department is establishing a workgroup for the Houghton to Chassell Trail. The charge of the workgroup is to recommend trail uses. A report is expected in July.

Mr. Radabaugh announced Bill O'Neill has accepted the position of Forest, Mineral and Fire Management Field Coordinator for the Northern Lower Peninsula.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Tom Gallagher, St. Helen Snowpackers reported their emergency sign program was successful last season and thanked Mr. Radabaugh for sending clarification letters to field staff. **Mr. Gallagher** asked if snowmobile equipment can be used to grade ORV trails. He said the Snowpackers own the equipment outright because it is 12 years old. **Mr. Radabaugh** said the issue that arose last season was not so much a question of equipment use, but rather a question of properly notifying and obtaining field authorization to do the work. **Mr. Radabaugh** suggested their group work closely with their field contact person.

Bud Martin, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club said his club would like to put new gravel in Frank Alley Memorial snowmobile parking lot. He would also like to use their equipment for snow removal instead of contracting out that service. **Mr. Radabaugh** suggested he prepare a written proposal and submit it to his field contact.

John Houk, NE MI Snowmobile Council questioned Mr. Radabaugh regarding the railroad grade in Rogers City, and how it is progressing. **Mr. Radabaugh** said negotiations on the land exchange are in process and that multiuse must be considered.

Al Green, Cadillac Winter Promotions asked Mr. Radabaugh for a status report on the Yuma to Viaduct Road section. He asked if their club would be granted right of entry to perform bridge maintenance this summer. **Mr. Radabaugh** reported that MDOT is currently considering the Department's lease request for this corridor. Lease agreements must be completed before a determination can be made concerning bridge repair and maintenance. Agency engineers recently completed bridge inspections and are preparing cost estimates.

Larry Marzean, Alpena Snowmobile Club asked if the Department would reconsider a previously submitted trail proposal for the connector trail in Paxton Quarry and Maple Lane. He asked if this route could be used on a temporary basis. **Mr. Radabaugh** said the Department's concerns with the original proposal remain and if modifications have not been made to mitigate the concerns it would not be reconsidered.

NEXT MEETING

The next SAC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 21, 10:30 a.m., BJ's Restaurant & Catering, 990 North Center Street, Gaylord, Michigan.

The meeting adjourned at 1:15 p.m.

Public Present:

Greg Zybert, Chocoday Township Chief of Police	Norm Theil, Trail Riders Snow Club, Baldwin
Don Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club	Ray Compeau, Snowmobile Association
Bud Martin, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club	Bob Eller, Alpena Snowmobile Association
Bradley Potter, Western MI Snow Council	Larry Marzean, Alpena Snowmobile Assoc.
George Binder, West Shore Snowmobile Club	John Houk, NE MI Snowmobile Council
Oscar Reed, West Shore Snowmobile Club	Rodney M. Altman, PI Sno Trails
LaVern L. Longroy, Ogemaw Hills Sno Club	Robert Piner, PI Sno Trails
Al Green, Cadillac Winter Promotions	Jerry Lesnick, Jordan Valley Trails Council
Tom Gallagher, St. Helen Snow Packers	Gerry Argetsinger, Jordan Valley Trails Council
	Jim Barber, Jordan Valley Trails Council
